

## ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** August 25, 2015

**Agenda Item:** Biennial Rule Regulating Use on Nature Conservancy Land Recreation Management Area

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 minutes

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### **Background**

In January, The Nature Conservancy acquired 117,152 acres of Plum Creek Timberland in the Clearwater and Blackfoot watersheds. In February, FWP met with TNC to discuss ideas for a possible land recreation management plan for the 163,883 acres in Missoula, Powell and Lewis and Clark counties. The land is enrolled in FWP's Block Management program, which provides free public access during the fall big game hunting seasons. The proposed biennial rule will provide year-round recreational access for public use.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The tentative rule was approved for public comment in July by the Commission. An opportunity for public comment was offered but none was received. FWP is unaware of any specific opposition to this rule or to the practices proposed.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

Managed public access will reduce resource damage caused by unregulated access and trespass, prevent vehicular damage to soils and vegetation, and avoid excess disturbance to native wildlife including threatened and endangered species. Without these rules, TNC may close these lands to public access.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission approve the proposed rule, which would allow FWP to work in partnership with Montana-TNC to provide a significant amount of managed public recreation access to high quality lands.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move that the Fish & Wildlife Commission approve the Montana Nature Conservancy Lands, Recreation Management Area biennial rule.